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SUBJECT: VATICAN AND ARAB LEAGUE SIGN AGREEMENT TO PROMOTE PEACE AND
DIALOGUE

¶1. (U) The Holy See and the Arab League signed a Memorandum of Understanding April 23 to strengthen joint projects to promote peace and dialogue, especially on the political and cultural level. The Memorandum was signed by Archbishop Dominique Mamberti, representing the Holy See, and by Amr Moussa, the Secretary of the Arab League. The Holy See and the League established diplomatic relations in 2000. The League has a representative to the Holy See based in Rome, while the Holy See's representative to the League is the nuncio in Cairo, Archbishop Michael Fitzgerald.

¶2. (U) According to a Vatican statement released after the signing ceremony, the new agreement further consolidates the bonds of collaboration existing between the Holy See and the League of Arab States, especially on a political and cultural level, in favor of peace, security and regional and international stability. The agreement also "proposes instruments of consultation between the two parties with attention also to initiatives of interreligious dialogue," the statement said. Post will post the text of the agreement on its Diplopedia portal page when available (<http://vatican.state.gov>).

¶3. (SBU) Comment: Speaking to CDA later in the day on the margins of a diplomatic event, the Vatican's deputy foreign minister, Monsignor Pietro Parolin, said the agreement highlighted the Church's firm resolve to continue with inter-faith dialogue in order to promote understanding and reduce global tensions. While there is no doubt that this was a key Holy See motivation to sign the accord at this time, it is also quite likely that the Vatican wished to make a tangible gesture to its Arab and Muslim partners on the eve of the Pope's visit to Israel, to demonstrate the Church's even-handedness and credibility to deal with Middle East peace issues. End Comment.

NOYES